

The Ballarat Naturalist

June 2010



EXCURSION TO HADDON COMMON, HILLCREST BLOCK AND SURFACE HILL 8/5/10

LEADER: GREG BINNS

A mild, calm and sunny day provided ideal conditions for the day's excursion, attended by 14 members.

Haddon Common: accessed from Taylors Rd and Station St, this was a different area of the Common for many of us and included a small dam over which large numbers of dragonflies were hovering and on which there were most attractive reflections. Common Froglets were calling and small fish, probably *Gambusia* were visible. We were greeted by the calls of Striated Pardalotes in flocking groups, and Crimson Rosellas. One Rosella was seen bathing in the dam for several minutes.



Gymnopilus Sp.

In the bush surrounding the dam were Scented Sundews *Drosera whittakeri*, Narrowleaf Bitter-pea, Common Flat-pea *Platylobium obtusangulum*, Honeypots *Acrotriche serrulata*

and many *Pimelea* seedlings. The extra rainfall this season has resulted in a welcome carpet of green, such a contrast to the dry, brown crackly ground cover and litter which had become the norm.

Recent rain has resulted in a wonderfully diverse show of fungi. Les Hanrahan's skills were in great demand and I am grateful for his expertise in naming just about every species



Ghost Fungus
Omphalotus
nidiformis

Photographed
by Carol Hall on
the excursion
and at night.



we saw. Here were Earthballs *Scleroderma* sp. whose outer skin had split into recurved lobes in the mature individuals; cutting the immature ones in half revealed a dark grey core, the spore mass. *Amanita ochrophyloides*, *Russula clelandii* and *Mycena viscidocruenta* were new to most of us, the latter being attractive tiny red individuals. A brown *Boletellus obscurecoccineus* had a yellow pore surface and its form contrasted markedly with the gilled fungi. *Laccaria* sp. a under the hand lens. An attractive array of Ghost Fungus *Omphalotus nidiformis* grew at the base of a dead Messmate (see Postscript).

Some old, high spreading Silver Banksias grew on the east side of the dam, with Blackwood *A. melanoxylon* and patches of last season's Trigger Plants *Stylidium* sp. Grey Everlasting *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, a *Leucopogon* and *Tetratheca* were noted. Rivulets of red toffee-like resin had run down the stems of the Black Wattle – but its taste is indifferent! Wallaby scats were scattered around, a Kookaburra called and White-winged Choughs farewelled us.

Hillcrest Block: gaining access from Preston Hill Road, this was another "uncommitted" block many of us had not visited before. Covered by Messmate Stringybark *E. obliqua*, Narrow-leaf Peppermint *E. radiata*, Little Grass-trees *Xanthorrhoea minor* and Narrowleaf Bitter-pea, this also proved rich in fungi. More native *Amanitas*, lots of *Russula* fungi especially *persanguinea*, and red and yellow Coral Fungi of the *Ramaria* group provided added interest. Tiny *Stereum illudens* measuring barely a centimetre across appeared on twigs, and names such as *Phellodon niger* and *Rhodocollybia butyracea* were introduced to us, the latter a common, chestnut-brown coloured gilled fungus. Pretty Horn *Calocera* sp. tiny yellow columns a centimetre high, belonging to the jelly fungus group, decorated other fallen twigs. A very tactile pink-brown fungus with a moist velvety surface *Postia pelliculosa* just asked to be stroked, then photographed with ideal sidelighting to highlight the texture. A large white warty "toadstool" fungus was named *Amanita ananiceps* reflecting some resemblance on its surface to pineapple textures.

Looking up for a change we saw or heard White-eared Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin and Brown Tree-creeper, and noted *Hardenbergia* and *Hovea* sp. when we weren't observing fungi. Elspeth was busy noting plants and commented that it would be a good idea to maintain and update Pat Murphy's lists.



Postia pelliculosa

Greg had discovered an ideal place for lunch on the edge of Smythesdale: Brewery Dam, built in 1863 where a brewery had been established to supply the miners. In warm sunshine we had a short wander through a patch of native (but not indigenous) plantings including wattles and a Pincushion Hakea.

Surface Hill/Argyle Dam: This reserve was the victim of bushfire about three years ago and with the dry years little regeneration had occurred, leaving it a mass of exposed quartz-strewn ridges left

by sluicing, interspersed with a maze of channels, aqueducts and circular mine shafts (Chinese). Resting on Ordovician bedrock this hill contains Tertiary deposits of quartz pebbles and gold-bearing gravels from ancient riverbeds. Much of this hill was two metres higher than it is today.

When we explored this area in 2001 for inclusion in our *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland* book (pub. 2002) we noted that "among the quartz pebbles in the gullies may be found Scrambling Coral-fern, Necklace Fern, Forked Comb-fern and Bushy Clubmoss". Today it was possible to find scattered seedlings of Bushy Clubmoss about 15cms high down in the moister sheltered gullies, and strands of Necklace ? Fern beginning to creep over the white pebbles. No living Coral Fern was found but there were plenty of dead stalks lying around.

Around the higher edges the forest is dominated by Messmate Stringybark and Brown Stringybark and at ground level were Cranberry Heath *Astroloma humifusum* beginning to flower, lots of Trailing Goodenia *G. lanata*, widespread *Dianella revoluta*, and Little Grass Trees. A tiny *Wahlenbergia* was seen, some Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata*, and a single flowering Parson's Band orchid *Eriochilus cucullatus*. Last season's *Pterostylis nana* and *parviflora* were visible and Golden Wattle *A. pycnantha* and Myrtle Wattle *A.*

myrtifolia were noted. The lichenised fungus *Omphalina* sp. occurred on disturbed ground and more Earthballs appeared.

I am indebted to Les Hanrahan and Elspeth Swan for their expertise, enabling this report to be as comprehensive as it is. Thanks to Greg who led us to some lesser known aspects of our local area.

Postscript: the author returned to the wonderful clump of Ghost Fungus at Haddon on Sunday night and by means of a 45 minute-long exposure photographed the luminescent group by its own light (f8, ISO 800). At night the fungus is a gentle white colour, which does not throw any light on its surrounds but is easily visible once darkness has fallen. In the camera the image is recorded as green as seen in Bruce Fuhrer's book *A Field Guide to Australian Fungi*. (Revised Edition 2009).

Carol Hall, Report and Photographs

OWLS AND OTHER BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA – MARILYN HEWISH

Marilyn is well known in bird watching circles having been 'birding' for 30 years and having written the book *Birds of Long Forest*. Her talk this time took us out of our local area to the winter of North America and then to warmer parts. It was February 2005 when Marilyn ventured to Upper New York State near the Canadian border. She commented that this was not the usual tourist season with temperatures of minus 30 degrees but observed that having lived for two years in Montreal, they were prepared for such cold. I forget if the temperature was measured in Fahrenheit or Celsius but it doesn't matter as they are about the same at this temperature. To underline the nature of the weather a picture of ice fishing was shown and one demonstrating the layers of clothing that needed to be removed when going indoors.

A key purpose of the trip was to see owls. Number 1 seen was the Short-eared owl which is active during the day and represented by a fuzzy picture with Marilyn indicating she had a much better one from a visit to Hawaii in 1991 hence indicating how long she had been pursuing this interest.

The next series of photos demonstrated the ingenuity applied to the construction of bird feeders in an attempt to deter squirrels. One design rotated under the weight of a squirrel so it was 'thrown off' but not with the weight of birds, allowing them to feed. Feeders allowed the observation and photographing of a number of species and to show the visit was for more than owls we were shown pictures of other species. Pictures included Downy woodpecker, Hairy woodpecker, Pileated woodpecker which was comparatively large, Blue jay which was nice and blue, Dark-eyed junco, White-breasted nuthatch with its turned up beak, Black-capped chickadee which were very common and more.

Next there were water birds seen with the help of a friend who worked for Cornell Bird Research. A scenic picture showed a flotilla of ducks estimated at 6,000 plus. There were Canada geese, Canvasback duck, all white Snow goose, Glaucous gull, Iceland gull, and to top off this photo series a Bald eagle photographed with a camera held to binoculars.

The second owl shown was a Great horned owl after which the one that got away was shown. It was a Barred owl and we were played the call. Amhurst Island in Lake Ontario was visited as Snowy owls were supposed to be there. Owls number four, five and six for the trip were shown being Northern Saw-whet owl, Great Gray owl which is bigger than the Powerful owl and the Snowy owl although this latter was only at a distance from a ferry.

Marilyn then took us off to Florida with its 80 degree Fahrenheit climate needing considerably different clothing and the gated community providing a different cultural experience. Here the Wakodahatchee wetlands and Corkscrew swamp were visited. Birds mentioned included Little blue heron, Glossy ibis which is the same as ours, rare Yellow-crowned white herons, the common ones being black, Willet, White ibis with lovely red legs and bills, Roseate spoonbill, Snowy egret and rare Reddish egret.

At Fort Myers in western Florida Burrowing owls were seen. These incredibly cute birds are quite small being about six inches long and go underground during the day. This was owl number seven. At Mt St Helens in Portland, Oregon Marilyn was treated to a flock of 20 to 25 thousand Canada geese flying overhead. An American Dipper was discussed, a bird that hunts by walking underwater.

As well as seeing bird photos we were treated to beautiful scenery and snowy vistas. On this visit Marilyn indicated she missed seeing a Screech owl but returned in May 2007, filling this gap and also seeing Barred owl but as yet has not seen a Hawk owl.

Thank you Marilyn for taking us on an informative and interesting armchair tour which resulted from your many hours of observation and searching.

Peter Dalman

FIERY CREEK WETLAND MID-MONTH EXCURSION, TUESDAY 11 MAY.

Seven field nats travelled to Mt Cole to meet members of the Bendigo District Environment Council and Wombat Forest Care. These groups are working on developing links between Mt Cole, Mt Lonarch and the Pyrenees. We visited Fiery Creek wetland which is downstream from the Cave Hill Creek nature trail. The wetland is surrounded by pine plantation but has a dense cover of sedge and remnants of forest plants on the narrow margins. Elspeth prepared a comprehensive plant list.

On the return journey we were shown an interesting area south of Moonlight Road. The area contained good regeneration of Ben Major Grevillea *Grevillea floripendula* and a daisy-bush *Olearia floribunda*. It would be worth a visit in the spring.

John Gregurke

Club camp at Apollo Bay

Christian Brothers facility, Nelson Street
Monday 21st June to Friday 25th June 2010



Don't forget you will need to bring linen and towels and a hot water bottle! There is no heating in the bedrooms. Cooking facilities are comprehensive, lounge room views beautiful and whales again would be a bonus.

We are looking forward to a relaxing, interesting, social week.

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT INCORPORATED
No. A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING - 7 MAY 2010.

1. Opening and Apologies

The President, Elspeth Swan welcomed 32 members & visitors.
Apologies were received from Kaye Crawford and Douglas Menon.
Accepted on the motion of Paul Norquay; seconded Claire Dalman.

2. Minutes of previous meeting Tabled and Summarised in Ballarat Naturalist.
Confirmed on the motion of Peter Billing; seconded Carol Hall.

3. Correspondence

IN:

- Geelong FNC: Geelong Naturalist, April & May 2010.
- Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee, April & May 2010 / FNVC: Field Nats News, May 2010.
- Bendigo Bank: Statements / Various: subscriptions.
- DSE: Murray Goldfield Fire Operations Plan.
- Department of Justice: Information session – effectively managing a club,
- Margaret Rotheram: Membership, Barwon Heads Bluff publications.

OUT:

- Volunteer Grants 2010 application / Various: SEANA camp refunds.
- Matt Pywell, Ballarat Wild Plants: Statement for syllabus sponsorship.

Received on the motion of Dulcie Brooke; seconded Helen Young-Harvey.

4. Business arising from correspondence: nil

5. Reports

- Treasurer's Report: Opening Balance \$3767.87, Income: \$560.00, Expenses: \$122.66, Closing Balance: \$4205.21.
- Stockyard Hill Wind Farm panel hearing: Commenced after Easter and will continue until 25 May. Submissions have been made on many issues including environmental, brolga wind turbine syndrome.

6. General Business

- FNCB Camp: Heath's Folly, Apollo Bay, 21-25 June. Sheet circulated for members to indicate intention to attend.
- Committee meeting:
 - Sub-committee to look at updating Club constitution.
 - Club promotion: Discussion centred on ways of attracting new members to maintain a viable and dynamic Club.
 - Actions:
 - Email syllabus and monthly meeting notice to interested people. Elspeth Swan will collate list of email addresses.
 - Syllabus to be placed in Library foyer.
 - Syllabus and newsletter to be sent to City of Ballarat Environment Officer.
 - Display to be set up in Library. Elspeth to contact library.
 - Meeting notices to be placed in Courier and News.
 - Safety and Risk Management to be discussed at the next committee meeting

- Supper Roster: Sheet circulated for members to volunteer.
- 7. Show and Tell**
- Marilyn Hewish: Field Guide to Moths of Victoria. Volumes 1 & 2 of 12 – 15 volumes are available for \$12 per volume.
 - Carol Hall: Satellite photographs of Iceland volcano.
 - Les Hanrahan: Fungi photographs.
 - John Mildren: Fly Agarics growing at Queen Elizabeth GC in garden bed without presence of oak or pine trees.
 - Elspeth Swan: Orchid Greenhoods *Pterostylis revoluta* flowering in Brisbane Ranges.
 - Carol Hall: Striated Pardalote at Long Point Flora reserve. Collared Sparrowhawk at North Gardens Wetland.
 - Tony Johns: At Lamplough Reservoir – pair of Masked Lapwing, Red-rumped Parrot, White-browed Babbler and woodswallows.
 - John Gregurke: At Western Treatment Plant – 2 Orange-bellied Parrots, Grey-headed Flying-fox caught on barbwire. South of Beaufort – Swans with 5 cygnets, Striated Fieldwren, Sharp Midge Orchid *Genoplesium despectans*, Tiny Greenhood *Pterostylis parviflora*.
 - Paul Norquay: Two Ringtail Possums using wire rope to move between two groups of trees. Up to 100 spiders seen during evening talk – picked up by eye shine reflected from LED torch.
 - John Sorrell: Eastern Tree Frog *Littoria sp* one brown, one green in tubes of bromeliad, others along fence and croak when familiar noise is heard.
 - Margaret Thomas: Scarlet Robin bathing in puddle at Brown Hill. Pair of Common Bronzewing along Yarrowee River, Black Hill.
- 8. Excursion**
- Saturday 3 May, meet at Ballarat High School boatshed carpark to leave at 9.30am Haddon and Hillcrest area. Leader: Greg Binns.
 - Mid month excursion 1: Tuesday 11 May. Fiery Creek wetland near Cave Hill Creek. Meeting Ian Magee (Bendigo District Environment Council) to prepare plant list for the swamp. Gumboots may be useful.
 - Mid month excursion 2: Thursday 27 May. Bushrangers Reserve, Piggoreet.
- 9. Syllabus Item**
- Marilyn Hewish “*Owls and other birds of North America*”
- 10. Supper**

Wednesday 9 June 2010

Conservation and production - Natural allies.

Presented by Ray Thomas founder of the Regent Honeyeater Project near Benalla and the organisation's president, Rob Richardson, a beef producer and agroforester.

7pm at Burrumbeet Hall.

Gold coin donation.

CALENDAR 2010

JUNE

- Fri 4 Prof. Peter Gell, Director, Centre for environmental Management, Uni. Of Ballarat. *Understanding Wetland Conditions: Lessons from the Past.*
- Sat 5 World Environment Day walk along Yarrowee Trail. Meet at Gong Gong Reservoir at 11am or 2pm.
- Sun 6 *Fungi.* Les Hanrahan, Club Member. Leaving from our usual spot at 9.30 and then to the carpark, Garden of St Erths, Blackwood.
- 21-25 Club Camp, Heath's Folly, Apollo Bay

JULY

- Fri 2 Dr Grant Palmer, Environmental Scientist, University of Ballarat. *Ecological Thinning.*
- Sun 4 *Union Jack Reserve, Buninyong.* Dr Fran Hanrahan, Club Member. pm only.

SUPPER ROSTER



June Fran Hanrahan, Genny Binns

July John Mildren, Bill Murphy

Website for those interested in Fungi—Fungimap—very interesting website as well as a downloadable newsletter. www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap/home

Committee

President.....Ms Elspeth Swan
 Vice-President.....Mr Greg Binns
 SecretaryMr John Gregurke
 TreasurerMr Les Hanrahan

Mrs Claire Dalman
 Mr Peter Dalman
 Dr Frances Hanrahan

Mrs Carol Hall.....
 Mrs Val Hocking
 Ms Nina Netherway (editor)

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:-John Gregurke,
 Editor: Nina Netherway,

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Community>Local Clubs> Environment*

Meetings are held at the Prince of Wales Park Clubrooms in Prince of Wales Park, Gillies St on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Leave from the carpark adjacent to BGS & BHS boatsheds at the south end of Forest St., Wendouree.

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